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In hour-long conversation with Prime Minister Ben Halim this morning, joined at mid-point by Foreign Minister Sahli, former made following points concerning Libyan attitudes on expansion army:

(1) Speed has now become critical factor in formation appropriate-sized federal army.

(2) He has always considered that Britain is ally should and would make expansion possible. This philosophy affirmed by his talks with British War and Foreign Office London last June.

(3) However, due to slowness British action, he was now reluctantly forced threaten British with diversion development funds to army expansion.

In answer my direct query how United States could best assist in process assuring establishment adequate control army, Prime Minister said:

(1) It was his intention switch British into second place and United States into first place in terms predominant influence Libya.

(2) However, he felt it most important retain British in second place as consistent with pro-Western orientation. He had conveyed British promises of last spring his Parliament and thus would find it difficult resist those in Parliament who would terminate anglo-Libyan relationship unless British performed under these promises. Therefore, it was desirable that for present British retain considerable responsibility for expansion army.

Comment:

Agreed 12/30/57

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Comment: It is consistent with Ben Halim's increasing pro-Western orientation that he wished continue British influence in Libya at high level even while moving United States into top slot. He feels that current anti-British attitude resulting from Suez folly will not continue for long, even though encouraged by Egyptians. He feels that basis exists for "friendly revisions" in Anglo-Libyan treaty to advantage both parties. He would be satisfied with arrangements which would provide for joint Anglo-Amer[illegible]an assistance to army until such time as status Britis[illegible]stige throughout Arab world clarifies. This seems to [illegible]tirely reasonable position on part Libyans.

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